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Chair

Ms. Julie Dabrusin

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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● (0845)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, everyone.

We are continuing our study on cultural hubs and cultural districts in Canada.

[*English*]

We have a panel of witnesses today consisting of Kathy Ouellette, General Director of Centre Materia, Mark Sandiford from Creative P.E.I., and David Moss and David Santelli from La Piscine.

[*Translation*]

We will now move on to presentations, starting with Ms. Ouellette, from Centre Materia.

Ms. Kathy Ouellette (General Director, Centre Materia): In 2000, the Maison des métiers d'art de Québec, the MMAQ, created the Materia Gallery, located on the ground floor of its eight-storey building, in the heart of the Saint-Roch neighbourhood, in Quebec City. At the time, there were no presentation venues for crafts in Quebec. By adding a public gallery to its premises, the MMAQ opened itself up to the world by attracting the attention of passersby, but also by allowing master craftspeople who came from all over to showcase their work and make it known.

In 2003, the Materia Gallery became the Centre Materia, an artist-run centre overseen by a board of directors operating at arm's length from the MMAQ's board of directors. Materia's sustainability is due, even today, to the considerable financial support from the MMAQ.

Materia's mission is to spread and promote research and creation in crafts, nationally and internationally. As the only Canadian artist-run centre for fine crafts, Materia is working to highlight the work of the biggest creators, as well as emerging artists, by presenting it in a professional context. Material is becoming a unique site for presenting and interpreting current fine crafts. Over the years, the excellence of events presented at Materia has contributed to changing mentalities and opening up perceptions on crafts.

Since its creation, the centre has presented the work of nearly 600 craftspeople selected by juries of their peers. At a rate of five or six exhibits a year and a number of satellite activities, such as conferences, seminars, videos and publications. So far, Materia has coordinated over 100 exhibits and welcomed nearly 70,000 visitors. Altogether, that represents direct benefits of $680,000 for artists, be it in copyright royalties, exhibition fees, professional fees or sales. The impact on the community is not only monetary; it is direct and daily on all types of users.

The main challenge, for Materia, has to do with operational funding. Some artist-run centres that are recognized and supported for their mission, but others, such as Materia, are recognized but are not supported. For nearly 18 years, the centre has been hoping that its mission would finally be recognized by the Canada Council for the Arts.

We occasionally receive funding for projects from the Canada Council for the Arts. That funding is certainly essential, but it focuses on the short term. Strong strategies with a sustainable impact on a community are not built in a hurry.

According to Mana Rouholamini, of the Canada Council for the Arts, last year, the money allocated to projects increased by 224%, while the money allocated to operations increased by only 55%.

I am the director of an artist-run centre that employs four people, three of whom are permanent employees. As the general director, I have a bachelor's degree, and my salary is $29,700. The project coordinator, who holds a master's degree in museum studies, earns $22,300 annually. The person in charge of the public and set-ups, who is a technician with a college degree, earns $15,600.

It is extremely difficult to retain staff. On average, general directors remain for 3.4 years, coordinators for 1.4 years, and those in charge of the public, 0.6 years.

Those staffing changes considerably slow down the centre's development and make it difficult to establish stable connections. Because of those changes, canvassing is almost non-existent and organizational functionality is precarious, not to mention the cost and time spent on hiring and training staff.

The solutions adopted to balance budgets have the least impact on the quality of exhibits. In those conditions, it is practically utopic to hope to unlock an organization's full potential.

The anemic funding and the non-indexing of subsidies to operations have direct impacts on the centre's sustainability.

In Quebec, in May 2018, minimum wage will increase by 6.6%. Artist-run centres cannot increase their prices to make up for the losses. The impacts will be felt on workers involved in cultural fields, be it through reduced work hours or job cuts.

Finally, in our opinion, increasing the money provided for operations and the number of centres entitled to those subsidies is critically important. Financial assistance for the mission confirmed over several years—for example, three years—would enable artist-run centres to plan their cultural offer more adequately and take the long-term into account. Most importantly, it would greatly improve the quality of life of passionate artists and cultural workers.

● (0850)

The Chair: We will now hear from our next witness.

[*English*]

We're going to go to Mark Sandiford of Creative P.E.I., please.

Mr. Mark Sandiford (Executive Director, Creative PEI): Hello. Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before this committee.

I'm Mark Sandiford. I'm the Executive Director of Creative P.E.I. We're the sector council for the cultural and creative industries in Prince Edward Island.

As with every province and territory, the cultural industries are extremely important to P.E.I., both socially and economically. But what I believe makes P.E.I. unique is our ability to collaborate across disciplines and with other sectors. This is the gift of being a small, tightly connected society. As a result, we have a lot of cultural hubs, both formal and informal. This morning I would like to walk you through some of our experiences.

Let's start with a definition. For me, cultural hubs are places where people gather to participate in cultural experiences. Historically on P.E.I., that would have been in churches and kitchen parties, libraries and dance halls, but now we have the kinds of cultural hubs we're discussing here today.

In P.E.I., cultural hubs typically start with anchor facilities, such as the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown, the Victoria Playhouse in Victoria-by-the Sea, Artisans on Main in Montague, and Green Gables House in Cavendish. These anchors serve as magnets for other cultural activities and enterprises that eventually grow to form a full-blown cultural district.

In our experience, successful anchors are often single-purpose facilities. The multidisciplinary aspect of a hub only emerges later as the anchor is joined by others. I think this is an important note. Cultural hubs are stronger if they're encouraged to grow organically rather than be over-designed and over-built at the start. The key to starting a hub is to create a well-focused, robust, sustainable, limited purpose facility. The key to growing a hub is to encourage other players to establish additional facilities within walking distance of the anchor.

P.E.I. is lucky to have low real estate prices compared with the rest of Canada. One of the keys to our success in growing our culture sector has been affordability for housing and commercial rent; however, we are beginning to see our own gentrification challenge. P.E.I.'s population growth is great, but it is also putting upward pressure on affordability that may soon need to be addressed.

Recently I've been thinking a lot about public libraries as a model for cultural hubs. Canada has a large built infrastructure of libraries, all dedicated to serving a cultural purpose. Now that the need for lending physical books is declining, it may be time to think about how libraries can be repurposed as cultural hubs.

There is strength in networks. In P.E.I. the professional theatres have recently formed a network to support each other. This network allows smaller rural theatres, such as Watermark in North Rustico, to work with larger theatres, such as the Confederation Centre and The Guild, in Charlottetown, on things such as training, staffing, and joint marketing.

Film P.E.I. recently opened a media-focused hub that is actively reaching out beyond its core membership to offer their facilities and programming to other groups, such as the P.E.I. Crafts Council and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy. Fostering these horizontal connections between hubs is the key to maximizing the impact of investment in infrastructure.

This leads me to the topic of programming. Facilities are great, but I think that too much emphasis has been put on infrastructure and not enough on programming. Canadian Heritage needs to extend its excellent cultural spaces fund to give hubs the consistent organizational funding to allow hubs to be staffed and to deliver programming.

Finally, I would like to talk about economic impact. In P.E.I. this is closely linked to the issue of seasonality. P.E.I. is a tiny market. Our population is only about 150,000 people. Every summer, however, we welcome more than one and a half million visitors.

This situation creates two very different cultural realities. From June to September, all of the theatres are packed, there are festivals galore, and artisans do a booming business. By November 1, in rural P.E.I. pretty much everything is closed. Cultural activity shrinks to Charlottetown.

Given this situation, it is amazing that P.E.I.'s cultural sector performs just under the national average in terms of jobs and GDP. It's pretty much all accomplished in four months.

Seasonality is very tough on workers. I believe part of the solution to this problem is to find a way to refocus the off-season on providing cultural experiences for our own residents. Cultural hubs could be the ideal vehicle for making this happen.

In Charlottetown, we are already seeing the beginnings of how this could work. The Confederation Centre and The Guild shift their programming focus to serve a local audience. Dance classes start up. Winter festivals bring people out. We are also seeing some fascinating new initiatives that could accelerate this process: a potential new discovery centre focusing on the STEAM disciplines and a possible makerspace, all being planned to exist within the cultural district.

What we need to do now is to figure out how cultural organizations and all levels of government can partner to encourage the growth of these kinds of initiatives.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

We will now hear from David Moss and David Santelli, from La Piscine.

[*English*]

Mr. David Moss (Co-Executive Director, La Piscine): Good morning. Thank you very much for inviting us to speak to the committee on the subject of cultural hubs and cultural districts in Canada.

We really appreciate the care that has been taken by the committee in its thorough study of these two timely and interrelated subjects for Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast. Please note that in our testimony we use the terms "creative hub" and "cultural hub" interchangeably.

I will preface our testimony with a brief overview of what La Piscine is and does and of its anchor project Le Rodier, Montreal's first site that will be dedicated to cultural and creative entrepreneurship.

La Piscine is a non-profit organization created in 2015, whose mission is to catalyze and cultivate the first-ever ecosystem dedicated to the development of entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sectors in Montreal and across Quebec and Canada. Its expertise, and consequently the primary activities it pursues, are first, the design and delivery of customized acceleration programs to accompany the development of creative and cultural entrepreneurs and companies with high growth potential, and second, the design and animation of the very first-ever site in Montreal dedicated to cultural and creative entrepreneurship. This site will be a veritable cultural hub.

La Piscine is focused upon innovation and value creation allowing entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries to realize their full potential from an economic growth standpoint, as well as the social impact that they have on their communities at any scale. In July 2017 La Piscine and its real estate partner Gestion Georges Coulombe announced the acquisition of the Rodier building, situated in the heart of Montreal's Quartier de l'Innovation in downtown Montreal.

The purchase of the building from the City of Montreal was effectuated within the framework of a call for proposals that responded to economic, social, and cultural development objectives and opportunities. This iconic building was erected in 1875 and is a notable part of the city's historical and architectural heritage. It is currently being restored and renovated and will soon bear a new vocation as a cultural hub entirely dedicated to cultural and creative entrepreneurship.

I'd like to show you a few pictures of this building, which you may recognize.

On the left-hand side you have a picture of the Rodier Building around 1901 and a more, I would say, modern picture that was taken in the 1980s. Next is a side view of the building. It is known as "Montreal's Flatiron Building", referencing the New York Flatiron Building. Here is a picture that was taken just before the purchase last year. What you have here are architectural renderings of what the exterior of the building will look like by the end of this year, from the north side of the building facing downtown Montreal and from the south side of the building facing Montreal's Old Port.

Creating a strong link between Montreal's heritage and cultural innovation—actually a long link in the case of the history of the building—the Rodier will be a point of convergence for entrepreneurs, investors, and the entire community engaged in supporting the development and growth of culture and creativity in Montreal, Quebec, and Canada.

La Piscine is the project partner driving the development of the creative hub, which is targeted to open towards the end of this year and will be animated by the following five components. First, it will be a space dedicated to supporting the development and growth of cultural and creative entrepreneurship, with specific programs to accompany and support the incubation and acceleration of cultural and creative talents, organizations, and businesses. Second, it will provide open access for collaboration and experimentation, whether for testing new business models, products, or approaches to public engagement.

Third, it will be a place for organizations and businesses whose mission is to support the development of the cultural sector and creative industries. Fourth, it will be a public space that encourages experimentation in the culinary arts and elevates Montreal's innovative culinary community and the entrepreneurial spirit that emboldens it. Fifth, it will undertake a proactive engagement in the civic development and renewal of Griffintown, where the Rodier is situated, also in the heart of the Quartier de l'Innovation. It's is thus a veritable living lab ripe for experimentation with local residents for social impact.

I'm now pleased to provide an overview of our vision for a cultural hub and cultural district.

● (0900)

A cultural hub is a physical space that provides accessible opportunities for a mix of actors in the arts, cultural, and heritage sectors, creative industry enterprises, and individuals to work, to engage with one another, and to collaborate.

The community that breathes life into a cultural hub is representative of an ecosystem that includes artists and creators of all types; arts, cultural, heritage, and creative organizations and enterprises; service organizations; and expert professionals in the field of cultural and creative industry and related business development support—for example, capital investment, market development, etc. They come together for the express purpose of working, collaborating, and benefiting from the synergies that a diversity of expertise, experience, capacity, contacts, and opportunities present when they converge into a hub.

Cultural hubs convene, and they curate this community and support the development of entrepreneurship and business skills, encourage this collaboration, share knowledge and best practices, and showcase their work with the express intent to create value and develop opportunities for the participants' economic growth and their social impact.

Cultural hubs engage citizens, businesses, community organizations, and institutions where they reside, and they play an active leadership role in the development of the surrounding area. The local community can serve as an excellent testing ground for regional, national, and international development, scaling, and impact.

Cultural hubs are not a means to an end. In fact we feel that the idea is not to close artists and creative industry players in a building or geographic area per se and expect that they will come out the proverbial "other end" different and better, but to help create value and growth for entrepreneurs so that they can test locally and then develop internationally. We need to keep in mind that a hub is a passageway. It's like an airport, where people come and go, and then they come back on their way to another destination.

I'd like to speak to cultural hubs and the notion of community.

The Chair: I'll give you just a heads up that you're getting close to the end of your time. You might be able to bring up some of this through questions too.

Mr. David Moss: Thank you. I will expedite this.

In our view, cultural hubs, at their core, not only validate and recognize artists and creators in their valorization of their art form, creative discipline, practice, organization, or business, but to their community and society at large. They serve as community hubs, really. We believe that cultural hubs should have the soul of a community centre, where above all community is a value and a philosophy. They create a strong sense of belonging, a strong sense of place. They also uphold and cultivate the notion of community that transcends beyond the walls of the actual physical space and extends across geographic territory without limitations.

We operate within the realm of cultural innovation and entrepreneurship, and I would like to make a few points about this topic. That drives our vision for the Rodier building. It begins with the central idea that an artist is an entrepreneur. Artists by definition of their own creative research process are pro-active innovators at their core. They practice innovation.

We are convinced that this inherent sensibility can generate more economic value and social value.

The Chair: I'll cut you there.

Mr. David Moss: Okay.

The Chair: We're going to have a whole question-and-answer period, and you'll be able to bring in some of your information there.

Mr. David Moss: Sure. Thank you very much.

The Chair: We are going to begin with Mr. Hogg for seven minutes.

Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): You can start by finishing what you were just doing there, using my time.

Thank you.

Mr. David Moss: I'm going to skip to cultural districts, if I may, and we have a few recommendations. I don't know whether you would permit me to make those recommendations.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: That's fine.

Mr. David Moss: In summary, we feel that a cultural district can be summarized in two points. First, it's a space for living, where everybody meets, and it's a sort of a playground for those who use and share private and public space. It is also an experimental space where social, economic, and civic development can be enhanced.

Our recommendations are three-fold and summarize the way the federal government can encourage and support the development of both cultural hubs and cultural districts to realize their full potential.

One is to support the development of cultural innovation. Up to now, much attention has been placed on product innovation. We feel that cultural innovation, particularly as it pertains to organizational development or innovation and the veritable transformation that organizational models require these days, needs more attention and support to actualize the growth potential of the cultural and creative sectors.

Two, we feel that the federal government can continue to work even more closely with the municipal, provincial, and territorial governments and other federal departments to help ensure alignment of local priorities, opportunities, challenges, and programs. A lot of focus in this area has been coming out of economic development and innovation portfolios, from what we're seeing. We know that with the creative economy in the spotlight in many places throughout Canada in the technology sector, we need to keep in mind that the cultural and heritage sector operates on a somewhat different plane and has much to contribute to a more impactful and integrated creative economy strategy, and the federal government can certainly be a champion of this opportunity.

● (0905)

Mr. Gordie Hogg: It's my turn again. Can we trade off a little bit here?

Mr. David Moss: I'm good. Your time is my time.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Are you roughly finished those?

Mr. David Moss: Yes, sure. I have one more recommendation.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Quickly hit your one more recommendation.

Mr. David Moss: It's to support cultural hubs in their operation and their development. To actually operate these things, there are currently no programs available, beyond the infrastructure. We need to operate them and manage them effectively and we need to program them in ways that can catalyze the opportunities that are presented here.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: We've had three fairly significantly different presentations in terms of the level. I think the commonality I'm hearing is certainly the notion of cultural hubs' involving the sense of community, the sense of commitment, and the sense of belonging that's created through this type of process.

Can you tell me a little bit about your organizational model? You're all non-profits. How does that function and work? Is there an organizational model that would be more effective for you than the model you're currently functioning under?

Mr. Mark Sandiford: We're a one-person organization that presides as an umbrella over a whole bunch of other one-person organizations that all have their own boards and this sort of thing. It's a massively inefficient system, yet because of the requirements of funding, we have to stick to our box and those people have to stick to their boxes. We're thus trying to do as much collaboration as we can.

It strikes me that allowing industry to be able to bulk up a little bit, to be able to collaborate—not just to co-locate but to actually work as integrated organizations—would be a big step in the right direction.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Thank you.

Kathy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: We are a non-profit organization, an artist-run centre. So most of the board of directors is made up of craft artists, as our vocation is related to crafts. We collaborate a lot with the Maison des métiers d'art de Québec. In addition to sharing the same building, we have the same interests and clienteles. As a result, we have many projects, artist residencies, exhibits and conferences in common. We work on that jointly with the Maison des métiers d'art de Québec.

Centre Materia, located in the heart of Saint-Roch, is surrounded by a number of different artist-run centres. We have already met with the representatives of the Méduse organization, which brings together many other artist-run centres. We also have partnerships with private galleries. We are trying to include them in peer juries, for example, to select artists who will have exhibits. We try to select from a group of people who have expertise in the area.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Let me change gears for you a little bit.

Mr. David Moss: Sure.

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Most of my experience is in social services, and in social services they're looking at more methods by which they can use an economic sort of model. Since the changes in culture, we've seen many fewer dollars flowing to social programs and to cultural programs.

A number of the social programs are looking at trying to quantify what they do in an economic sense, but there are different models coming in place. There's something called a social impact bond. A social impact bond is something whereby the social organization can show the social value they have, but in economic terms, and the state is looking at and compensating that.

Is there some way to quantify? I've heard of studies done and have looked at studies that say that for every dollar government spends on culture there's a $7 to $14 return. Do you have anything that quantifies this in any meaningful way in your experiences?

Mr. David Moss: We don't have anything on hand right now that speaks to the economic impact, but we know that there are many models. Most of them are led by boards of trade and those kinds of things. We know, however, that from an economic point of view, whether for tourism development and/or local economic development, there are up-to-date numbers available.

We think there's an opportunity to establish other key performance indicators around the impact of cultural development both on the economic side, in terms of growth potential such as we're speaking to today, and in the way that actually can contribute to GDP at the local level and beyond. We are talking about the international now more than ever—being rooted very locally but with international potential—for our creative businesses.

We also think, and I'll pass the floor to my colleague around this, because he works a lot in the field of social impact, there are no measures right now for many of the things we're talking about, in terms of social impact. There has been a debate going on for 25 years in the cultural sector around whether we should or shouldn't develop some. Obviously, in fact, culture—cultural participation, cultural engagement, the impact it has on communities—has very soft-impact sorts of measures.

How do we actually capture that in a way that it doesn't confine the opportunity for art and creativity obviously and necessarily transcend, if you will—what's the word I'm looking for?—numeric coding.

● (0910)

Mr. Gordie Hogg: Your application of the word "entrepreneurship" throughout was what brought me back to asking this question.

Mr. David Moss: That's a key thing.

I don't know whether you want to speak to social—

The Chair: Unfortunately, that brings you to the end of your time. I will flag that you can always put in written submissions as well, if you have extra things that you want to talk about.

We are now going to Mr. Shields for seven minutes.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the witnesses today. There are some interesting topics and information.

One phrase really got me, and it was from Prince Edward Island. I'm glad to know it's going to open a little longer than usual. I've been to Prince Edward Island.

Other than the three months—and you're talking about three tight months, because I'll tell you, if you get there early in June and late in September, the doors close too often, so expanding that.... I wonder who's left on Prince Edward Island outside of those months.

You said "library". This is a world I've been involved in. In moving libraries into cultural centres or hubs, the synergy that happens is incredible, both for the library world and in the synergy that happens around it.

For example, we rebuilt in one community a recreation centre for $20 million, and without the library knowing it we added $5 million to the budget for a new library. Their lowest attendance day is triple what they had in the previous location. There are numerous examples of this kind of synergy that happens when you include a library. They're natural programmers. They're natural networkers.

Would you like to talk about the library world?

Mr. Mark Sandiford: Yes, I'll expand on that.

For me, the obvious inspiration is the Halifax Central Library, which is just a brilliant example of expanding the notion of what a library is. I think anybody who has been there will notice that it's packed all the time. It functions, really, as a very public space, in the sense that people are as welcome there as they are on the sidewalk out on the street. People come in sometimes just to snooze or play a video game or something like that. It's already creating the opportunity for people to come together.

The big point I want to make about the Halifax public library, though, is that it programs its space. If you look at its website, you see that all of the rooms are booked, with programming going on all day long. There's always something to do. Sometimes you manage your own time, but at other times there are things for you to do. They're also very open to partnerships with other community organizations. I just look at that and ask, how can we build on that success?

Mr. Martin Shields: Even in a community of 15,000, this library is only closed three days of the year. The library is the most open centre in your community. They run the most hours. That connection I really like, and I think in a sense, if we're talking about libraries, finding a way to get them into your cultural hubs and centres is a critical piece. It works both ways.

Let's go to you in Montreal. You're having troubles getting funding: 18 years and they don't look at funding you. What's with 18 years' work and your not being able to match the criteria?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: We receive funding from the Canada Council for the Arts for some projects, but the funding is not focused on the centre's mission. We also receive funding from SODEC and the City of Quebec, mainly for the centre's operation.

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay. You're still working to get there.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: All right. Good.

Operational funding you've talked about. I think all three of you talked about operational funding. We hear that from everybody. You get the money for projects, you get the money for infrastructure, but how are you going to be ongoing now that you're open?

How are you going to deal with operating yours?

Mr. David Moss: It's an excellent question. I'll speak a little bit also to Mr. Hogg's question, because the two questions align.

We're a non-profit organization, but we're also partners with a real estate developer who specializes in restoring heritage buildings and managing them, so we have an excellent partner. It's already a hybrid model to start with, and we have a real estate company created in which we have representation. We're the service partner for that relationship to bring this project to life.

We have a number of different tracks to build the business model. First of all, we have some initial seed funding for the programs and to build the business model for the building, which we're actually doing right now. I'll even say business models, because we don't think that there is one business model by which to operate this building. We think there are hybrid models to look at, with a real estate partner and other partners within the sector. Many are interested in exploring the ways we could exploit them.

We run on a principle and will continue to run on a principle of being a lean start-up. We're not going to be a big institution. We're going to be a number of people in an ecosystem who come together around a governance model that is non-profit in order to activate this community and support it and bring in the right people and organizations to partner in growing its potential.

We also have an opportunity, which is in the constitution of the organization, to become an eventual co-owner of the building, which would also activate an opportunity to generate revenue for the non-profit through rental income. There will be a restaurant in it, as I was saying, that will also have an opportunity to service all these things.

We're not looking at a major operating cost. We're really looking at some key activators, if you will, within the organization that can speak in an organic way to what building this community and ecosystem means from the building's point of view.

● (0915)

Mr. Martin Shields: But it was your third recommendation.

Mr. David Moss: My third recommendation was to support cultural hubs in their operation and programming.

Mr. Martin Shields: Are you going to self-fund it?

Mr. David Moss: We hope there will be a hybrid model, that there will be some business revenue, but we also think there's a private-public partnership here as well, that the governments will help us generate both economic and—

Mr. Martin Shields: So you are looking for a piece of public funding for operating.

Mr. David Moss: Absolutely.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay. Most of what you just said had nothing to do with that.

Mr. David Moss: We're looking at a diverse model.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay.

You talked about staff turnover. Is this part of the operational funding challenge you have?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: Yes. That is one of our biggest challenges, since we constantly have to train staff. Given the low wages, they are often young people who are recent graduates with no experience. The turnover rate is slowing down our development. In addition, it becomes difficult to motivate staff and develop a passion for building truly innovative projects when those people have to work two or three jobs.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to welcome Ms. Hardcastle to our committee for today.

You have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a very intriguing discussion. Thank you for your input.

What I would like to do to use my time most effectively, because you know I have seven minutes, is to give you a couple of questions so that you have time to ponder them while other people are answering.

I basically want to get back to the idea that was touched on in Mr. Moss's recommendation with respect to where funding should go for operational programs. Madame Ouellette spoke about the issue of actual physical structures and having some consistency in being able to pay a hydro bill. Then Mr. Sandiford spoke about that organic development.

What is the government's role? There is access. There is a regulatory environment through which we are fostering a blockbuster culture. What should we be doing? What is the best way for us to be approaching this and working with territories, with provinces, and with cities, in your experience so far, so that we move forward?

Mr. David Moss: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] as well but I think we have to think hyperlocally and we have to respond to what is actually happening on the ground. It's clear from what we've seen through this study and here today that there is no one-size-fits-all for anything, and there is no one reality.

From my experience creating and managing Culture Days for nine years, I have a sense of what's going on in this country through the lens of about 850 Canadian villages and towns and major urban centres. There is no common link in terms of what the local reality is —around who the leadership is, around the convergences around cultural assets, around the actual local culture. I think what the federal government needs to be particularly attentive to is what other hyperlocal realities there are in order to really understand where it can intervene in a coherent way, and of course, in collaboration with the other levels of government and with partners who are around the table, because the partners come in all different shapes and sizes, as we have seen.

● (0920)

Mr. Mark Sandiford: I would completely echo that.

Just to follow up on what David was saying, I completely agree with him. I think the mechanism for this is to have partner meetings to find the relevant person in the provincial, municipal, or territorial government and a few of the key other partners in the ecosystem and have regular meetings to figure out where we are going and how we can do these things better together. I think working in isolation is going to be a problem for us. Working together is going to lead to success—again, with the focus being hyperlocal.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: I think the government can trust community stakeholders. They are creators, they are inventive and find creative solutions. Cultural districts often form organically, at first. Artists get together in low-cost locations. At some point, those groups attract people, stimulate the cultural offer and contribute to the development of cities and provinces.

I think that supporting projects under way could take things further and, most importantly, help people who have been investing efforts for a number of years. That does not go against new projects, types of groups or cultural centres. Trusting stakeholders, regardless of the type of group we are talking about, is already a major step.

Mr. David Santelli (Chair, Board of Directors, La Piscine): I would like to add a comment.

We are talking about cultural centres, which are focal points, but they are also elements for promoting culture and its stakeholders. It was mentioned earlier that funding for a project or a program is often related to specific approaches. There is little recognition of the need for funding for animation, collaboration and coordination of those ecosystems, be they organic, structured or semi-structured. It is difficult because we are talking about intangibles. Program development or guidance formulas must involve an understanding of that need if we want to grow cultural ecosystems as cultural districts or centres.

I think this would be an important element to consider.

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Let's go back to the first recommendation you had, Mr. Moss, with regard to the support for that kind of innovation if we're talking hyperlocal. You probably heard Mr. Sandiford's response about having regular meetings that can help foster the understanding that a federal regime would need to fund somehow. What do you think that could look like, just off the top? Was that what you meant by supporting innovation?

Mr. David Moss: No. We think about it from an organizational point of view. Today's cultural and heritage organizations are designed to not necessarily be able to optimize their missions in today's world, based on cultural participation factors such as fostering the blockbuster culture, as you mentioned, and these types of things.

I am going to let my colleague speak to this, because his area of expertise is in the accompaniment of creating this value through cultural innovation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Santelli: Fundamentally, what is important when we are talking about animating ecosystems where it would be possible to showcase cultural innovation in a much more extensive way, is to understand that an artist is, first and foremost, engaged in an entrepreneurial endeavour. Artists are also innovators, by their very nature, because they are engaged in experience, research and experimentation endeavours with the public.

It is perfectly possible to increase the harnessing of that value. That is sort of the role we have given ourselves—not only to guide those approaches to bring diversity or model hybridization, but also to bring that value into other spheres that could than be applied to the artistic world. The impact may be artistic, social, economic or even civic. Our role is to be able to guide those approaches and increase that general intellectual property.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Now we will be going to Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank everybody for their great presentations. One of my questions has already been asked, so I'll try to be a little creative with my questions.

I want to apologize to you, Ms. Ouellette. I missed your presentation. From the little I've read about your organization, it seems that you've done some of your projects internationally. My question to you is, how important is it for hubs to collaborate internationally? How does it impact the learning and the creation process? Is there some way the federal government can be helpful in this area?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kathy Ouellette: It's always important to work on promoting arts and crafts, whether locally or internationally. We must transport our culture and the expertise of the people who make it. Supporting projects internationally allows people to grow their businesses. As we have said, each artist is self-employed. We are talking about small businesses, which sometimes have employees.

So it's a question of helping them with exporting. It is sometimes difficult for artists to take objects out of Quebec or Canada; there are many steps to take. As an organization, we can do it. We are reducing the barriers for them to create or manufacture valuable pieces for export.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much.

The more you explain about La Piscine, the more I think of our Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto. It sounds very similar. They have a building and then within that building, there are a lot of social innovators. There are artists. There are creators. I co-founded an environmental group, and I held a space there as well. It's really a wonderful space to bring groups together.

I was a little surprised to hear that La Piscine is the only one of its kind in Montreal, just because it feels like a place that would have a lot of different types of spaces that actually promote this type of innovation. What were your specific challenges in trying to develop the proposal for La Piscine, and how do you think the federal government could have helped?

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Santelli: Compared to the Centre for Social Innovation, there are spaces in Montreal, particularly the Esplanade, that play that role. I think that La Piscine's specificity lies in relationships with the clients it serves, that is to say the world of arts, culture and creativity. It is therefore really specialized compared to the mission of the Centre for Social Innovation, which is very broad and cross-cutting in this environment.

I would say that the main challenge we had to face was to demonstrate to the cities that the share of those companies is still significant. They generate more than 7% of the GDP in the Montreal area, but we had to work to gain recognition for the major role of artists and cultural entrepreneurs in Montreal.

I come back to the question you asked. Basically, the reality is that La Piscine is internationally recognized because, by definition, its entrepreneurs are born with a global vision. We do not often realize how important these entrepreneurs are in Montreal, because most of them are better known internationally than they are in Montreal. We have so many examples.

In this hyper-local model, the challenge is to be able to simultaneously create a supply at the local level and to have an international presence, to work nationally and internationally with ecosystems, in Toronto and across the country, and also with other authors of creative works, because there is currently an international movement, of that kind, which is in the process of being generated.

● (0930)

[*English*]

Mr. David Moss: If I may just clarify one point, what we're proposing here is that the site, the Rodier building, be the first site entirely dedicated to cultural and creative entrepreneurship. It's not that La Piscine is pretending to be necessarily the only one of its kind in our city.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Okay, thank you. That's an important distinction.

Montreal is a very diverse community. I lived there for four years and I loved it. Can you tell me what you're doing to make sure your community will reflect the diversity of the wider community? It could be either one of you from La Piscine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Santelli: The interesting thing is that the idea behind La Piscine was moved forward with the participation of two colleges, Dawson College and the Cégep du Vieux-Montréal, which are already a symbol of this diversity. They are the two largest colleges in Montreal, one anglophone and one francophone. By definition, I would say that the essence of La Piscine was built in line with the logic of Montreal's bilingualism. This is a key aspect because the entrepreneurship we want to serve is being created and exists in this diversity, which therefore makes it one of the building blocks. The neighbourhood in which we are located is a neighbourhood that has some richness and a historical past in terms of its diversity.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

Mr. Sandiford, I agree with you that creativity just has to be given the space to be able to evolve, and that changes over time. I often worry that, as part of this study, there is a danger that we will over-regulate or over-legislate. It really is a concern of mine, because we truly want to be helpful beyond just providing operating funds. I know we do more funding for programming in addition to infrastructure.

I've heard loud and clear, not just from your group but from many, about the importance of collaboration and bringing groups together, not only within the same city but across the country and even internationally. We need to be able to help evolve, very naturally, our different cultural hubs.

I know I'm over time right now, but I just wanted to say I appreciate your comment about that, and it's very much top of mind for us. Thanks again for all your great presentations.

The Chair: Thank you to everyone on the panel. That was really interesting.

[*Translation*]

The groups shared some diverse ideas and experiences.

[*English*]

We are going to suspend briefly while we bring in our next panel. We have a panel of four coming in.

Thank you everyone.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (0940)

The Chair: All right. We're going to start again.

We have four groups of witnesses. One is missing, but I'm hoping they will be here after we get started.

I'd first like to welcome Kasey Dunn and Victoria Velenosi from Brick and Mortar, in my own community.

It's good to see you here.

[*Translation*]

We also have Vincent Roy, from EXMURO arts publics, and we are waiting for the representatives from La Filature.

[*English*]

We also have with us, via video conference, The Theatre Centre, with Franco Boni.

Because of technical issues, it usually works if we start with the video conference first. Please start with your presentation, Mr. Boni. Thank you.

Mr. Franco Boni (Artistic Director, The Theatre Centre): Thank you so much for the opportunity to share a bit of my story and The Theatre Centre's story.

I want to begin by showing you this image of the building that our theatre is in. It's a former Carnegie library in the heart of Queen West in Toronto, which is an artists' neighbourhood. I refer back to Jane Jacobs: new ideas need old buildings. This is an old building that was renovated about four years ago with the support of all levels of government. We had been in the neighbourhood and serving artists for 25 years, but it wasn't until we moved into this building that we saw our responsibility being much greater.

The neighbourhood was gentrifying. There were many condominiums, with thousands of people moving into the neighbourhood, and there was a real loss of public space in the community. There is a park, and that's about it. A lot of the other establishments in the neighbourhood are areas for transactions—for drinking, for restaurants—but there is hardly any public space, so the responsibility for The Theatre Centre to be a public space, a space for the community to gather, was extremely important. It was central to the concept of moving forward in our public programming but also to our ethos, to asking the question: what can a theatre be and who is it for?

I want to move forward with some of the slides on just generally who we are and our role within the community as a research and development hub for the community, serving artists across the country. Moving forward, it's about finding inspiration: what is the purpose? What is the purpose of a public space? It's about the importance of that. I just want to draw your attention, I guess, to one thing that I say quite a bit, which is that we built a theatre, but in fact what we're doing is nurturing a public space, and we do that every day. We're not open only at showtimes. We open at 8 a.m. We have a café that has free Wi-Fi and that welcomes people in. We're a third space.

What I want to do is just to go through some of our programs around our development programs, which are residency and the Progress Festival.

I'm not sure how much time I have, so I'm moving through stuff quite quickly.

● (0945)

The Chair: You have about three more minutes.

Mr. Franco Boni: Okay. Sorry. I have a little more time than I thought.

For me, on the concept of community hubs, we're now called a community hub, but it's not something that we proclaimed. It's not something we said. We didn't say, "Oh, we're a community hub." We've built trust and respect, and with a generosity in how we create and move through our programs, that's really how we developed ourselves as a community hub. You can't just say "here" in a community and plunk down something that suddenly is a community hub. These things take years. The Theatre Centre has been in this neighbourhood for over 20 years.

I want to talk through some of our programs, so that we can move through the slides all the way through to slide 24, for the sake of time, because it gives you a sense of our Theatre Centre café/bar, which really is the heart of our space. We host a community meal in that space every month. We have a "baker-in-residence". We hired a local baker who makes and sells fresh baked goods. Everything is local. Our Objectorium in the café sells crafts by local craftspeople. We have a program that animates us. As shown on the next slide, every corner of the building is filled with art, so these are chance encounters that the public has with art. Our library gallery, which is a nod to the fact that we were a Carnegie library, is our free library. We have a gallery upstairs allowing for a multi-arts venue.

I often say that the space itself is a playground. I think of it in that way. I want the public to think of it as a playground. We have light boxes on the outside, where we can speak to the public. Thousands and thousands of people go by on Queen Street. Shown in this slide is a sign where we encouraged people in the community to vote in the election. We hosted an election party.

Also, we'll go down to, say, 36 Lisgar, to Active 18, a local neighbourhood association that meets in our space quite regularly. We have a condo project, which is a program where we're working with the residents of one condominium in the building to try to activate and to ask them what they need from us, what they need from a theatre. It took some time to really get things going, but now we're creating a bond.

I will say that what I often talk about is performing yourself in civic life. What I mean by that is that we all play a part. We know that when community members are involved in the arts, they're more likely to vote and more likely to be involved in civic planning, so what are the spaces in these neighbourhoods that allow for this kind of civic activity to go on?

Another project is that we had a newcomer program—

● (0950)

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off there, just because now you're over your time. You might be able to bring that out through some of the questions.

Mr. Franco Boni: I'm sorry.

The Chair: No, don't be sorry.

We will now be going to Brick and Mortar, please.

Ms. Kasey Dunn (Founder, Brick and Mortar): Good morning, and thanks for the opportunity to speak about cultural hubs in Canada.

Brick and Mortar is a small business that runs arts hubs in Toronto. Vikki and I run four spaces that are available to artists, community groups, and companies to rent. We serve dozens of groups every day and have a client base of over a thousand. We rent out the space on an hourly, daily, or weekly basis. We offer basic equipment and the support needed for a variety of arts uses, all at cost, with no long-term commitments. We have commercial leases or partnership agreements in every building where we work. We cover the cost of the rent, property tax, insurance, and utilities, and stock the spaces with the basic necessities.

To us, arts hubs are spaces that provide whatever enterprising artists need in order to use their skills to create their own employment. We provide do-it-yourself resources for them to take the first step towards start-up companies. Because we are the venue where these budding creators are taking their first plunge into entrepreneurship, we are also the place where they experience their first challenges or failures.

We opened the spaces because we believed that a lack of space was the main challenge facing artists. We have discovered that although the cost of space is a problem to artists, this is really more a symptom of a bigger problem. Even when we are able to offer space for free, it doesn't guarantee the type of success artists need, nor does it lead to sustainable employment. Creators need more from us than just space. If nobody comes to buy their tickets, their art, or their services, they are still not succeeding, no matter how cheaply we can provide the space, and many of them have no idea where to start. In order to imagine how an arts hub like Brick and Mortar could flourish, we must instead imagine how our artists could flourish. Our vibrancy is really just a reflection of the community that we're trying to serve.

In order to be successful, we need successful clients who can come back to us to produce over and over again. Our biggest challenge is an inability to retain our customers. This isn't because they go elsewhere to other hubs. It's because they quit entirely and leave the industry. They face overwhelming barriers that they don't have the training or resources to overcome. While we do work with some established companies like Stratford or Shaw, the bulk of our clients work on a project-by-project basis. They are very vulnerable clientele, which leaves us vulnerable in our attempts to cater to them rather than the larger, better-funded groups.

We recognize that not all artists are interested in starting a business, but the ones who come knocking on our doors are, even if they don't quite see it that way yet. A desire to create on their own, take control over their own careers, and earn income from their craft leads them to our doors. They require more support to bridge the gap to start thinking of themselves as entrepreneurs.

We believe the Government of Canada can help foster this new developing ecosystem. We think the most dire need is training at the intersection point between art and entrepreneurship. Every company and artist we have worked with talks about the lack of any kind of education in the fields of marketing, finance, or administration as it applies directly to the arts. Even though it has become culturally accepted that self-producing is the first step to getting started in the arts industry, none of our college training programs prepare students for this reality. We need programming that learns from the innovative start-ups in the private sector and applies it in the arts sector. Funding would be well spent in the creation of courses to offer business training to artists who want to start companies.

Within hubs themselves, funding is needed to administer training, workshops, and mentorship programs that can guide artists on how to use our spaces effectively. Rather than grants that offer artists one-time funding for projects, we would love to see a focus on company development and sustainability like the type of start-up grants offered to entrepreneurs in other fields. Hubs managers like us could also benefit from more business management training opportunities. After all, we're really just learning through trial and error too.

● (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The floor now goes to Mr. Roy, from EXMURO arts publics.

Mr. Vincent Roy (Executive and Artistic Director, EXMURO arts publics): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Honestly, I must say that I did not expect such a meeting. I thought it would be a little more intimate; I am quite impressed.

My name is Vincent Roy. I am the founder and the Executive and Artistic Director of EXMURO arts publics. The organization's mandate is essentially to disseminate and design temporary public art projects in the public space. I founded the organization in 2007. At the time, I was working in artist-run centres, but I found that this research community did not have many links with the public. It was all about the current arts. I decided to go outside the walls a little and make the art accessible to the public.

Gradually, the projects grew. At first, this was new in Quebec City. Then, the city nd the municipality realized the potential that public art could bring to people's experience and the joy of living in the city. Since then, we have been fairly well supported by the levels of government, especially by the municipal level.

This year, EXMURO will hold the fifth edition of "Passages insolites (Unusual Passages)", an event funded almost 100% by Quebec City.

I will present the project "Passages insolites (Unusual Passages)" by trying to make my remarks so as to repeat the themes that are the subject of your study, namely cultural centres and cultural districts.

In Quebec City, between 1990 and 2000, then mayor Jean-Paul L'Allier wanted to revitalize the Saint-Roch neighbourhood. Today, it is quite trendy, gentrified and very much alive. It's a sort of cultural lung. It used to be a bad, even a little dangerous, neighbourhood. Mayor L'Allier decided to create a park and make low-cost artists' studios accessible to them by exempting them from business taxes. He also created a number of artists' studios. In a short time, the neighbourhood was revitalized. It is therefore an inspiring example. Some might say that it exploits artists, but when you put artists together, it's a real strength.

In the past three years, we have witnessed a phenomenon called "artistic branding". The Saint-Roch neighbourhood is now a technocultural neighbourhood and the Place-Royale/Old Port Crescent and the Quartier Petit Champlain, very touristy places, have now become "Le Quartier Création". Finally, the Montcalm neighbourhood has become the Quartier des arts.

It seems that everyone wants to appropriate the artistic identity, which is very good because there is, in my opinion, a potential for attractiveness. Branding has to come from the heart. It must come from the core, from the artists. Artists must work there and develop their practices. When artists take over a place, an ecosystem is created.

Later, I will show you images of "Passages insolites (Unusual Passages)" to allow you to see what we are doing. The idea is sort of like decentralization. Thanks to "Passages insolites (Unusual Passages)", which has been around for four years, there are a dozen works installed in Old Quebec, that is to say in highly touristy areas. So we have the chance to meet a lot of people.

Moreover, in the last year, there was a desire to decentralize, to move to the suburbs, to the boroughs, in order to reach more people by taking the power of art outside. Personally, I see it sort of like an antenna broadcasting what we do in the cultural centres. I think it's important to keep culture and public art in the cultural lung, in the cultural centre.

However, it may be one of the last bastions. I do not know whether it's the same here or in your ridings, but a number of local businesses have been decentralized, meaning that they have moved to the suburbs. Shops and commercial businesses in the downtown area are now spreading to the suburbs. In my opinion, we must keep this kind of ecosystem in cultural centres.

● (1000)

You will now see scrolling images.

Initially, the objectives of the Passages Insolites (Unusual Passages) project were to promote public art. As I just said, we decided to create the brand of a creative neighbourhood. Afterwards, we actually had to create. We were given a substantial envelope totalling $150,000 to create public art in historical neighbourhoods. By presenting contemporary works of art, we had the opportunity to create a contrast with the historical side of the city, that looks just like old Europe. It's truly a great privilege. This initiative is much talked about and is very successful. Initially, it was supposed to last only one year, but because of the success of these works, it was decided to renew the initiative for a second year, then for a third. This is our fifth edition.

Municipalities are beginning to understand that this could also bring residents back to the neighbourhood. Earlier, I talked about the power of art. The residents had gradually abandoned Old Quebec, but we realized that living in these neighbourhoods and creating such cultural projects would make them more enjoyable, in a way. Young people might also want to settle there. We are no longer dealing with traditional tourism or Disneyland-inspired tourism.

Today, the idea is to bring residents back to the neighbourhoods they have left. At EXMURO, we work in the city centre, in the Saint-Roch neighbourhood, which is the cultural lung.

One aspect of your study struck a chord with me. My understanding is that when you talk about cultural centres, they are also institutions and buildings.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Vincent Roy: We work outside, but we are regrouping with organizations to create a kind of cultural centre in Old Quebec. The building in question is a former fire hall with an area of 8,000 square feet. The city is renovating this place in order to meet the standards. This is the beginning of repositioning artists in the tourist development. In the coming years, I think we will see developments around this cultural centre.

This meeting helped me find out about a fine federal program of financial support. So I will probably come back to see you.

The Chair: Thank you. Perhaps there will be some time left after the presentations for questions.

I will now give the floor to the representatives from La Filature.

Welcome, Mr. Vigneau and Ms. Charland. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Jean-Yves Vigneau (President and Professional Artist, La Filature Inc.): Good morning, my name is Jean-Yves Vigneau. I am, first and foremost, a visual artist, but I am also the President of La Filature. Let me introduce Diane Charland, who is responsible for bookkeeping and day-to-day administration. She works part-time whereas I'm a volunteer.

La Filature is located on the other side of the river, near the city centre of Gatineau, beside the Brewery Creek. Let me give you a very brief history, with one decade per sentence.

In the 1980s, more precisely in 1983, the situation was problematic: artists were leaving the region to settle in the big cities, especially in Montreal. Artists, of whom I was one, decided to come together. We found an old abandoned building that belonged to the municipality and, like many other organizations, we started to take care of the place and move there. The place was named AXENÉO7. We had a first exhibition, that of a young artist, in September 1983. Three years later, with the advent of new technologies, such as video, the DAÏMÔN artists' centre was created.

A little before 2000, it became clear that we absolutely had to move. We had been thinking about it for years. The building we were in was going to fall into ruin and the space was much too small. In collaboration with the AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN artists' centres, which are artist-run production and distribution organizations, we took steps to reclaim an old industrial building that had been boarded up for about 25 years. It was contaminated and nobody wanted it.

It took artists to dare to embark on such an adventure, but we did it. That project, which cost $2.5 million in 2002, was funded mainly by the Quebec Ministry of Culture and Communications, the City of Gatineau—which was still called Hull at the time—and Canadian Heritage whose contribution, through the Canada cultural spaces fund, made up about 7% of the overall budget and helped with the purchase of equipment.

La Filature, which has been around since 2002, is today an organization that is doing very well. It is not subsidized. It is a building, a piece of land, a space that belongs to the artists. We are the owners and we manage it. La Filature, as well as the AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN organizations, about which I will say a few words later, share the costs. We also rent some workshops to artists. Costs are shared. Funding comes from people's contribution to fees and expenses. We cannot really talk about tenants. We operate a bit like a cooperative. In addition, there is a lot of volunteer work.

As I said earlier, there are two organizations in the building: AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN. Both centres have built a reputation across Canada. They act locally, nationally and, increasingly, internationally, allowing artists to come and create new works and present them. Since we have been established there, the place has grown more and more. It has become a gathering place. There are, for example, openings and launches of exhibitions. Hundreds of people go there, and I can tell you that they come from both sides of the river.

I must also say that La Filature manages a series of productions. The artistic productions come mainly from the two organizations, but also from individual artists. AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN not only design programs, but they also occasionally carry out large-scale projects that you may have heard about. Last year, in 2017, for Canada's 150th anniversary, we held a major exhibition entitled "À perte de vue", which brought together a dozen artists from across the country, major artists who have produced major projects.

● (1005)

The organizations that are in that building work with a budget of approximately a half million dollars a year to support activities, aside from special events like the one in 2017, which almost doubled previous operational budgets.

We have been in that building since 2002, so 16 years already. We are beginning to think that the old building we renovated more than 20 years ago is starting to be behind the times. Increasingly, organizations and artists are feeling somewhat crowded, they lack space. So we already have some renovation, expansion and development projects on our drafting table. There are all kinds of possibilities that would allow us to meet the needs.

In 2002, we developed a project that could last 20 years, but now we see that we have to think ahead to the next 20 years. I don't know if I will be here in 20 years, but I was here 20 years ago.

That is a brief summary of the activities that allow us to present the projects of artists from various locations. Our centre really acts as a strong meeting place for artists who practice visual arts and contemporary media arts throughout the region, and who also work nationally and internationally. Over the past two or three years, for example, we have been able to host several indigenous and Inuit artists to come and produce artworks. We try to be as broadly open as possible to Canadian production.

● (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are going to proceed to our questions and comments period.

Mr. Hébert, you have the floor.

Mr. Richard Hébert (Lac-Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for all of these excellent presentations.

My first question is for Mr. Vigneau and concerns La Filature. We see on your website that Canadian Heritage is your partner in that it provides 7% of your budget.

Does the department support you in other ways?

Could you suggest recommendations that would allow Canadian Heritage to support you more?

Mr. Jean-Yves Vigneau: La Filature does not receive support from anyone except for the building's renovation. Quite recently, one of the organizations, DAÏMÔN, received a subsidy from Canadian Heritage for the installation of cultural equipment to set up a sound studio, which it had never managed to do before.

In fact, we have always wanted to demonstrate that if we are allowed to put in place equipment, infrastructure and tools, it is then our responsibility to manage them. As I often say, we don't want to ask a government body to pay our heating and hydro bills. However, we can't afford to invest, borrow and incur debt to renovate a building or even to expand it, because that would be an enormous burden for the organizations and artists who depend on subsidies.

As I was saying, AXENÉO7 and DAÏMÔN are mainly supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. The artists who use these workshops also occasionally receive grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres of Quebec, but we can't call that guaranteed income.

Mr. Richard Hébert: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Roy.

You are currently exhibiting a work entitled "Myth and Evidence" and I have for a certain time had the pleasure of seeing this unicorn that is exposed at the intersection of Laurier Street and the Portage Bridge.

What are the repercussions—I'm not talking about money but about the impact on the population—of your projects in the areas where they are exhibited?

Mr. Vincent Roy: Yes, I did not speak to that in my presentation.

Under a contract with the Department of Canadian Heritage, we take works that were used in the "Unusual Passages" project and we reinstall them elsewhere and circulate them. The circulation of artworks is something we can increasingly work with, because there is a demand for that.

We brought four works into the region, two in Ottawa and two in Gatineau, and "Myth and Evidence" is one of them. In fact, we went to see it yesterday — the unicorn — and she's doing very well.

You asked me about the impacts of our projects. We aren't always next to the works, of course. Citizens and passersby can view them, and they are as autonomous as possible. According to the comments we receive, the impact is really on quality of life. That is what I noticed since the foundation of EXMURO 10 years ago. If there is no public art, what is there in our public spaces? What poetry can there be?

We must not underestimate the impact looking at something for pure pleasure can have on people, something that is not publicity and is not trying to sell you anything. That amuses people and reassures them. They are simply happy to see something that surprises them. We play a lot on that relationship people have with free art. Those are the repercussions we observe most often.

Thanks to the millions of photographs that are taken, we benefit from high visibility. It's quite phenomenal, and means that these art works travel virtually throughout the world. Our reality is very linked to images. It's always a good thing for a city or municipality to project an image of openness, daring and originality.

● (1015)

Mr. Richard Hébert: What difficulties did you encounter when you created your organization? Once again, how can our government help you to continue to evolve?

Mr. Vincent Roy: In the beginning, the main problem was that municipalities refused to exhibit public art, but now, they are more open to that. They have even loosened certain rules. In the beginning, our works were considered like billposting, and municipal regulations had to be changed.

Ten years later, there is a demand, population asks for these. We also have to operate with revenue of $400,000, $500,000 or $600,000. Our funding is granted per project. We don't receive operational funding from the Conseil des arts et des lettres of Quebec, nor from the Canada Council for the Arts. Our operational funding is only $5,000. We feel this makes our projects more precarious.

We have a lot of support and the projects are going well, but it's as though we never managed to obtain operational subsidies because envelopes were saturated. That is changing a bit, and we are going to try to take advantage of it.

We are forced to manage our organization somewhat like a business, to the extent that we cannot depend entirely on subsidies, and so we create projects and partnerships. This makes us fairly dynamic in our search for funding. Operational funding is what we lack the most.

There's also the new location where as creators, we want to get together to create things together. The city of Quebec is renovating the building to bring it up to code — at a cost of about a million dollars — and we are the tenants. It's an empty envelope. There will also have to be an installation phase.

We have reached the point where it can really become a dynamic location and where we will really be able to take our place, and expand in the ecosystem of the environment.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds left.

Mr. Richard Hébert: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will now be going to Mr. Eglinski, please.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I thank all of our witnesses this morning.

In studying these cultural hubs and districts, we see that you folks are providing many different types of services: contemporary art, crafts and design, theatre, dance, writing and publishing, libraries, music, museums and heritage, and film and television, etc. I noticed that some of the presenters here talked about operating like a business, like you said, Mr. Boni. Some of you have a café in the facility, or a bakery.

But everyone seems to be focusing on the need for assistance in funding, whether it be from the municipal or district government, or provincial or federal, especially for building some of the complexes and stuff like that. We hear quite often that the better the complex is and the bigger it is, the more use it seems to generate in the cultural hub. I am curious for those.... This question goes to all four of you. I will start with Mr. Vincent Roy.

Do you expect any payment back from the people, the artists, who are using your facilities, whether they're learning or training there? Also, do you get a financial return from some of the people who have developed, or gained experience, or prospered through your ventures?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Vincent Roy: When we started, we did not have an operating budget. We have not had one for 10 years. We designed quite a creative way that allows us to find funding and obtain partnerships, a clientele, if you will, in the municipal sector but sometimes also in the private sector, by organizing events.

In a sense, we did the opposite, that is to say that we did not wait to have an operating budget and the possibility of occupying a building as tenants. We have no physical location. We just have an office. Our space is the public space. After 10 years, we want to move to the next stage, that is to say, to have a space where we can create. As I was saying, we have an operating budget of $5,000 and a budget for fixed costs of approximately $150,000 per year. I have to go and find contracts. In that context of self-funding, we really have to find original and creative ways of doing things. Earlier, I started to talk about the fire station that we are perhaps looking at using. We also have to rent space for other artists, with all the equipment they need. Equipment and storage are in great demand. That brings self-funding to us.

We cannot open a café, since the location is not really open to the public because of the regulations. We want to try to monetize our creative space and to not depend on grants. Grants are fragile because it is always possible for them to be taken away. That would be signing our death warrant.

● (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Maybe I could hear from one of the other witnesses. You still never did answer the question, and maybe one of the other witnesses can.

Are you getting remuneration back from the artists who are using these facilities, and do you expect to get any remuneration back for the services you are providing them? It could be through the building. I'm curious as to whether you get anything back from the people you are helping at present or will help in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Vincent Roy: Okay. I will answer quickly because it does not seem that I did so.

The service that we provide to the artists is in organizing events. Our clients are the municipalities. We hire the artists and we pay them. Alternatively, they can rent the production spaces.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Okay—

The Chair: I believe Ms. Dunn had her hand up to answer you.

Ms. Victoria Velenosi (Founder, Brick and Mortar): I will answer that question.

Our business functions entirely on revenue that comes in from artists who rent our space. We don't have any funding. We are completely self-sufficient. Over the last six years we've built four different spaces, solely from the revenue collected from the artists who use and need our space.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Vigneau: It is very similar with La Filature because, as I said, we receive no grants.

What we receive in return from the organizations and the artists to whom we provide spaces and services is principally the fact that the artists come to us, and work and produce with us. First, there are costs associated with that. In addition, people help us a great deal in return in the form of their volunteer work, without which we would not be able to exist. We would not be able to fund everything if we did not have a huge number of people working as volunteers. That is part of what we get in return, and what allows us to maintain a certain level of activity.

Otherwise, it would be totally impossible for us to operate financially, unless we became totally dependent on grants for our survival.

[*English*]

Mr. Franco Boni: The Theatre Centre's annual budget is over $1 million. Of that, 40% is earned revenue, 30% is public, and 30% is from private donations. That's the breakdown.

Our café really pays for itself. It's run as a social enterprise. We do get funding from all levels of government, but I feel that the work we do.... I didn't really describe some of the stuff we do. We support the research and development of new work across different disciplines, so we are the R and D hub. As in any other sector, there are always those places where new ideas and innovation occur, and that's the role we play in the ecology. That requires a level of subsidy, and that's at 30% of our annual.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Thank you to all.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The floor now goes to Mr. Nantel.

Welcome back, Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to you all for coming to introduce your organizations in order to enlighten us a little about cultural centres.

● (1025)

[*English*]

Actually, I'll speak in English. Maybe you're not able to get the translation out there.

The theatre hub and Brick and Mortar surely are hubs, but in a different way. I would say that the Theatre Centre is a theatre hub, because you actually have citizens getting involved, such as having access to the rooms. If I'm not mistaken, you have two or three companies relegated to one room, trying to produce in that space.

What do you want this program to become? We've had a lot of witnesses at these meetings, and you come here as concrete examples of how it grows naturally. What's one thing that you need to support your actual actions and one thing that you don't want to see coming as an intervention that would sterilize or bleach the spontaneity of things?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roy, Mr. Vigneau, Ms. Charland, once again, your organizations reflect all the spontaneity of a creative centre and all the spontaneity of artists working together. In your case, that seems to me more like a form of artists' cooperative. Congratulations for your tenacity and for the authenticity of your testimony. We feel your ability to think freely; my congratulations once more.

Mr. Roy, EXMURO is clearly a kind of creative centre that was established some time ago in the Saint-Roch neighbourhood.

Quebec City seems to have the means to make itself beautiful today. The word "means" occurs to me because you have talked about the private partners that support you. Each time I have seen something in Quebec City, it has always seemed to me that the quality of life of the people of Quebec City has been greatly enhanced. Just walking by a building and suddenly seeing trees coming out of windows is really wonderful, it is fun, it brings the place to life. I feel that work has been going on for a long time and your organization is the result of that, in a way.

I have this question for you. How do you see the Department of Canadian Heritage becoming involved in your program? What are the positive aspects and the potential dangers?

I will stop there, because I only have four minutes left.

The Chair: That is true. You have about four minutes left.

Mr. Jean-Yves Vigneau: I just want to give you some additional information. What I expect from the Department of Canadian Heritage is to meet our needs, those in the area of equipment, for example.

Artists are often very good managers, even if they are artists. They are able to take care of the locations, the equipment, as a contribution to the overall development of arts and culture in Canada. We are not asking the Department of Canadian Heritage to do it for us. We are simply asking for the support we need for infrastructure. I just emphasize that we are sometimes dealing with very heavy machinery and it requires a lot of volunteer work. That is one aspect to consider.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Do you have any other comments, ladies and gentlemen?

Mr. Jean-Yves Vigneau:

Mr. Pierre Nantel:

[*English*]

Ms. Victoria Velenosi: We are a self-sustaining model. We've proven that we can hold ourselves up within the community that we serve, without funding. I think the theme of the artists who come to us is that they're done waiting. They don't want to wait for grants either. It's too much. They're here, they're ready, and they want to do their art now. Nothing is going to stop them, and we can help them through that.

Kasey spoke to the need for more education and encouragement for artists to see themselves as creative entrepreneurs and have the education so that they can succeed faster, and fail less by trial and error, with a little bit more experience that can come from a training program or places where there is knowledge that can come from other sectors. Really, that is how we flourish, when the artists are able to do that. Our obstacle right now is that we are unfortunately running out of time in Toronto, with the gentrification and real estate market on a very fast track to pricing us out. In the meantime, while we're trying to get these artists to move faster into what they're inevitably working toward, perhaps there could be support for the spaces. Something the government could do would be tax credits and rent control offered to landlords willing to rent to small independent cultural hubs.

● (1030)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Invite municipalities like Toronto to do that.

Ms. Victoria Velenosi: Yes, for sure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Roy, do you want to add anything?

Mr. Vincent Roy: Yes. I agree with Mr. Vigneau when he says that the situation may have made us very good managers. In concrete terms, we need stability in the form of grants specifically for operations, in order to complete our financial package. We usually do four or five major projects a year through international partnerships. We go to France and then we come back here, specifically so that we can arrange for works to circulate. Two of us take care of it all.

We talked about volunteer work earlier. Here is an example. We are paid for half of the work we do. The second half is about passion and faith. I have no problem with that. I am a creator and it is my passion. However, we face problems like professional burnout. We are always walking on a tightrope, for sure.

We also need a place in which to create. We are like mechanics who have to repair cars in the street. We need an actual place today. We do public art and, as you can see, the works are quite large. Artists do not generally have garages or workshops where they can weld or assemble large pieces. So that is a new service we want to provide. There is nothing of that scale anywhere else in Quebec City.

We also want space where we can store the works. What I am about to say will seem a little improbable, but sometimes we have to throw out some works just because we do not have storage space. The works belong to the artists. In a way, we are the managers of those works. For various reasons, the city does not want to buy them, and neither do we. Artists have nowhere to store them. The works are still in very good condition, as they only spend four and a half months in a public space. So we are talking about two to five years of stability. So, clearly, we need space. We have tried to move the works around, and it works very well. We also want to distribute them among the municipalities. In any event, we really need a location.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

The Chair: That's all the time you have.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I think Mr. Boni would like to speak.

[*English*]

The Chair: Could you take a quick 30 seconds, Mr. Boni, so that you get a shot into that too?

Mr. Franco Boni: For me, hubs are places that are about innovation, are nimble, and should be about providing places and spaces to voices we don't often hear, especially in places in an urban environment like Toronto, where the population is changing and the way people are living is changing. People are no longer engaging with these large monolithic structures. They're working and interacting with small, more human-scale places.

I would say that Canadian Heritage should seek out those places and those people who are actually creating space for those voices we don't often hear, and fund and support those human-scale spaces where people can really be authentic in their expression.

Also, that's not just artists. That's where citizens and artists meet. I feel that artists so often have been taken out of conversations around health care, science, climate change, and education, when in fact the one thing that we are is communicators, and the one thing that we have is imagination. For me, it's really key to be able to insert conversations around science and all of those issues, in art centres. That's what creative hubs can do.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: We have a quote there.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you very much, Mr. Boni. I'm sorry. I have to cut you off there because we're running against the clock.

[*Translation*]

We'll go to Ms. Dhillon now.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Chair, thank you for giving Mr. Boni that time.

I thank the witnesses for coming here to meet us this morning. I will limit myself to one question, since I am going to share my time with my colleague Mr. Virani. My question is for Mr. Roy.

Mr. Roy, I would just like to know whether you have worked with other cultural centres elsewhere in Canada.

If so, did it have advantages or disadvantages?

● (1035)

Mr. Vincent Roy: Thank you for the question.

I can tell you without hesitation that collaboration and partnership building has only advantages because, even if it is with the little town next door, it is about cultural exchange. Right now, we are working with the City of Gatineau, actually, as part of another project. We have also worked with the City of Montreal, which hosted one of our projects last year. Creating partnerships is on our list of objectives because it is often how we generate projects. Currently, we are working with the people who hold a festival in France. We build partnerships and then we create.

That is often how we work when we are outside of Quebec City. Even in Quebec City, we have worked in collaboration with cultural organizations, artists' centres, the Musée national des beaux-arts, events like the Festival d'été de Québec, and so on. Our artistic production can still interest a lot of partners.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Great, thank you.

Mr. Virani, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you, Ms. Dhillon.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I want to thank our witnesses for their great presentations.

[*English*]

I'm going to direct my questions to you, Mr. Boni, partly out of self-interest. Your theatre space is located about 100 metres outside of my riding of Parkdale—High Park, so I want to start by saying thank you for providing a venue for the amazing creators and artists in places like Parkdale not only to develop their talents but also to offer those talents and truly engage in part of that conversation with citizens, which you've outlined so eloquently, in that sort of cultural hub environment.

I want to build on what you commented on two or three minutes ago in response to one of the other questions, and ask you about your residency program. Can you describe to us how it facilitates part of that engagement between artists and non-artists? It dovetails with some of the issues you listed, and the issue of mental health comes to mind most of all, for my riding but also for the downtown core. I know you have a neurologist from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, who is a current resident at your cultural hub.

How does having that type of person develop that conversation about mental health and provide a venue for people in downtown Toronto to engage in these issues through an artistic medium?

You could start with that, please.

Mr. Franco Boni: Sure. Thank you.

There are two things. Suvendrini Lena is a neurologist at CAMH, and she came to us with an idea, an idea to really try to uncover the early stages of schizophrenia, something she as a doctor was quite interested in. She didn't know how to make a work, but she had a love of the arts, so we suggested we try to make a work with her. What would that be like?

We sat down for the better part of six months to talk through her ideas, and then I realized that what she needed was a sound designer. We connected her with a sound designer in the community, and then a scenographer came in, and eventually, now, what she's building is this installation. That's the project she's making, but beyond that, she teaches her University of Toronto theatre and medicine class at the theatre. So every month—it's a bit on hiatus at the moment—since about a year ago we have had doctors come in to the arts centre to read plays, to talk about performance, and to try to understand empathy, something the arts do very well.

She's a central figure now in our residency program. She has been with us now for three and a half years, making this work, and it's scheduled to be produced next year. The way we work with artists and with citizens is for the long term, and it's with questions. We're partnering now with CAMH and a number of organizations within the mental health community to uncover and unpack these questions that Suvendrini has.

● (1040)

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you so much.

I just want to ask you one more question, and this relates again to hitting these issues that people are concerned about in places like Toronto, areas like Parkdale, but doing it also with artists at a distance. I'm thinking about indigenous reconciliation in particular. I know there's the project called the Embassy of Imagination.

Mr. Franco Boni: Yes.

Mr. Arif Virani: That project has been funded by Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Franco Boni: Yes.

Mr. Arif Virani: Obviously, reconciliation is a big priority for our government. I think it's a big priority for the artistic community, but can you tell me why it's important to show the work of indigenous youth from Cape Dorset to a Toronto audience, and how you are pursuing reconciliation at The Theatre Centre?

Mr. Franco Boni: Yes. As soon as you walk in the door, we have our land acknowledgement. It's very present. It's there as you walk in. It references the dish with one spoon wampum belt, which means to peaceably share the resources of the land. It's one spoon and one dish and how we need to share those resources.

The Cape Dorset project was a fabulous partnership that we had with the Pan Am Path and a number of other organizations that brought those young people in from Cape Dorset. I want to also speak to partnerships. That's how we operate: with partnerships. It's about connecting those youths not only to our community but to the different communities we partner with. They spent a week on the Pan Am Path creating murals. Their artwork, which is in our stairwell that goes up to the theatre, is still there, so it is not ephemeral. With our building, we have ways to keep remnants of the works up so that as people come up those stairs they look at those drawings and murals and ask, "Who is that?" There are remnants left from that project as a way for us to continue to talk about our relationship with indigenous artists.

I just want to add, too, that it's not—

The Chair: I'm sorry. I'm just going to chip in and ask if you can do that very briefly, because we are running out of time.

Mr. Franco Boni: Okay. I just want to say that it's not just local indigenous work that we do this with. Next year, we are bringing in a piece of indigenous work from Australia. It's really about how those communities and those artists, not only those on Turtle Island, can connect with each other. It's also about what things we have in common, all as settlers on the land.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

My thanks to all our witnesses. It was really interesting, especially because the projects are so different from each other.

[*English*]

That's going to conclude this meeting. Thank you very much. We're adjourned.

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